

November 1, 2002

Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way N.
Olympia, WA 98501-1091

Coupeville, WA 98239-3603

Dr. Koenings,

I wanted to take the time to inform you about the admirable and unselfish actions of one of your employees. His name is Steve Stout, the Supervisor at the Marblemount Hatchery. My husband, Todd, and his Godson, Dustin, hunted for their first bears this year. Lured by Todd's description of the Washington outdoors, Dustin traveled all the way from New Orleans, Louisiana to hunt with his Godfather.

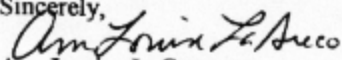
Although Todd had scouted some areas, spoke to numerous local hunters, outdoor storeowners, and researched numerous Washington outdoor websites, both he and Dustin were unfamiliar with the hunting areas, the terrain, and the habits of black bears. During a chance encounter with Steve while touring the Marblemount hatchery, Steve was generous enough to give guidance on hunting black bears and possible locations to hunt. With their energies renewed, Todd and Dustin hunted in several areas across the state, including Pysht, Sauk, Okanogan, Huckleberry and Pend Oreille. Dustin told me how amazed he was at the differences in the terrain throughout Washington and the abundance of wildlife.

As it turned out, on the last evening of the hunt, as they were working their way back to Whidbey Island, Dustin shot a bear on a steep mountainside with less than an hour of daylight remaining. After reaching the site where Dustin shot the bear, Todd and Dustin started up the difficult cliffside after the bear but was prevented from retrieving it because of darkness and the steep, unsafe nature of the cliff. With no way to get to the bear safely, Todd decided not to risk it and return home, planning to search for the bear in the morning. Complicating the recovery was the fact that Dustin was flying back to New Orleans the next morning. After dropping Dustin off at the airport early the next morning, Todd headed back to Marblemount alone. With limited knowledge of the area's road system, Todd drove to the fishery, where he had originally met Steve and requested his assistance. Steve quickly assembled a team to assist Todd in locating the bear. In less than an hour, the bear was found, largely because of the help of Steve and the expert assistance of Randall Martin, a local logger, who Todd admirably referred to as "Mountain Goat" who was familiar with the area where the bear had been shot.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for Steve Stout's selfless actions in assisting my husband and for his sincere concern for the wildlife of Washington. As a fisheries agent, Steve was under no obligation to assist my husband, especially since he was busy supervising the tagging of thousands of salmon. My husband confessed to me later that he was physically exhausted from numerous days of hunting and hiking, the previous day's attempt to scale the cliff, and the fact that he had been sleep-deprived for over a week. Without Steve's quick response, Todd would have never found the bear in time and possibly injured himself trying to recover it from the cliff alone.

Through Steve's selfless actions, a young man's dream of his first black bear was realized and the unforgettable adventures of a Godfather and Godson across the state of Washington will forever be remembered.

Sincerely,


Ann Louise LaGreco
Commander
United States Navy